<u>CLAIMS</u>

What is claimed is:

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1.   A method for pricing access to e-content comprising:

tracking one or more usage characteristics of an individual's access to e-content, wherein the one or more usage characteristics are selected from the group consisting of quantity of e-content accessed, quantity of time spent accessing the e-

10   content, nature of the e-content, and combinations thereof; and

charging the individual a price that is determined as a predetermined function of the one or more usage characteristics.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

15   establishing a usage profile for the individual;

storing in the usage profile the one or more usage characteristics tracked during a first session; and

updating the usage profile to reflect the one or more usage characteristics tracked during a subsequent session.

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3.   The method of claim 2, wherein the step of updating the usage profile includes accumulating the one or more usage characteristics over a plurality of sessions.

4.   The method of claim 3, wherein the price is determined as a predetermined

25   function of the one or more usage characteristics of the current session, the one or more accumulated usage characteristics, or a combination thereof.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined function is a non-linear function.

6.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

transmitting the e-content to a computer along with a usage tracker for performing the step of tracking one or more usage characteristics; and

accepting return of the e-content from the computer along with the one or more usage characteristics.

7.   The method of claim 6, wherein the step of accepting return includes receiving the entire e-content.

8.   The method of claim 6, wherein the step of accepting return includes deleting the e-content from the individual's computer.

9.   The method of claim 6, wherein the step of accepting return includes determining whether any copies of the transmitted e-content were made.

10.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

transmitting the e-content to a computer along with a usage tracker for performing the step of tracking one or more usage characteristics; and

periodically receiving messages from the usage tracker indicating a change in the one or more usage characteristics.

11.   A method for managing access to e-content, comprising:

downloading e-content from a server to a client computing device along with an embedded usage tracking program;

monitoring, using the usage tracking program, one or more characteristic of the client's access to the e-content;

transmitting, using the usage tracking program, a usage report including the one or more characteristics from the client to the server;

determining whether the client's access to the e-content exceeds an expiration setpoint; and

upon a determination of expiration, extending the expiration setpoint.

12. A computer system for pricing access to e-content comprising:

tracking means for tracking one or more usage characteristics of an individual's access to e-content, wherein the one or more usage characteristics are selected from the group consisting of quantity of e-content accessed, quantity of time spent accessing the e-content, nature of the e-content, and combinations thereof; and

charging means for charging the individual a price that is determined as a predetermined function of the one or more usage characteristics.

13. The system of claim 12, further comprising:

establishing means for establishing a usage profile for the individual;

storing means for storing in the usage profile the one or more usage characteristics tracked during a first session; and

updating means for updating the usage profile to reflect the one or more usage characteristics tracked during a subsequent session.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the updating means includes accumulating means for accumulating the one or more usage characteristics over a plurality of sessions.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the price is determined as a predetermined function of the one or more usage characteristics of the current session, the one or more accumulated usage characteristics, or a combination thereof.

16. The system of claim 12, wherein the predetermined function is a non-linear function.

17.   The system of claim 12, further comprising:

transmitting means for transmitting the e-content to a computer along with a usage tracker for tracking one or more usage characteristics; and

5   accepting means for accepting return of the e-content from the computer along with the one or more usage characteristics.

18.   The system of claim 17, wherein the accepting means includes receiving means for receiving the entire e-content.

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19.   The system of claim 17, wherein the accepting means includes deleting means for deleting the e-content from the individual's computer.

20.   The system of claim 17, wherein the accepting means includes determining

15   means for determining whether any copies of the transmitted e-content were made.

21.   The system of claim 12, further comprising:

transmitting means for transmitting the e-content to a computer along with a usage tracker having tracking means for tracking one or more usage characteristics;

20   and

receiving means for receiving messages from the usage tracker indicating a change in the one or more usage characteristics.

22. A computer program product including instructions embodied on a computer

25   readable medium, the instructions comprising:

tracking instructions for tracking one or more usage characteristics of an individual's access to e-content, wherein the one or more usage characteristics are selected from the group consisting of quantity of e-content accessed, quantity of time spent accessing the e-content, nature of the e-content, and combinations thereof; and

charging instructions for charging the individual a price that is determined as a predetermined function of the one or more usage characteristics.

23.   The computer program product of claim 22, further comprising:

establishing instructions for establishing a usage profile for the individual;

storing instructions for storing in the usage profile the one or more usage characteristics tracked during a first session; and

updating instructions for updating the usage profile to reflect the one or more usage characteristics tracked during a subsequent session.

24.   The computer program product of claim 23, wherein the updating instructions include accumulating instructions for accumulating the one or more usage characteristics over a plurality of sessions.

25.   The computer program product of claim 24, wherein the price is determined as a predetermined function of the one or more usage characteristics of the current session, the one or more accumulated usage characteristics, or a combination thereof.

26.   The computer program product of claim 22, wherein the predetermined function is a non-linear function.

27.   The computer program product of claim 22, further comprising:

transmitting instructions for transmitting the e-content to a computer along with a usage tracker for tracking one or more usage characteristics; and

accepting instructions for accepting return of the e-content from the computer along with the one or more usage characteristics.

28.   The computer program product of claim 27, wherein the accepting instructions include receiving instructions for receiving the entire e-content.

29.   The computer program product of claim 27, wherein the accepting instructions includes deleting instructions for deleting the e-content from the individual's computer.

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30.   The computer program product of claim 27, wherein the accepting instructions include determining instructions for determining whether any copies of the transmitted e-content were made.

10   31.   The computer program product of claim 22, further comprising:

transmitting instructions for transmitting the e-content to a computer along with a usage tracker having tracking instructions for tracking one or more usage characteristics; and

receiving instructions for receiving messages from the usage tracker indicating

15   a change in the one or more usage characteristics.

32.   A method for providing access to e-content on a server, comprising:

transmitting e-content from the server to a client computing device along with an embedded usage tracking program;

20   receiving a usage report from the usage tracking program including one or more characteristic of the client's access to the e-content;

determining whether the client's access to the e-content exceeds an expiration setpoint; and

upon a determination of expiration, initiating renewal of the e-content

25   expiration setpoint.

33.   A method for accessing e-content on a server, comprising:

requesting access to e-content on the server;

downloading e-content from the server to a client computing device along with an embedded usage tracking program;

monitoring, using the usage tracking program, one or more characteristic of the client's access to the e-content;

5   transmitting, using the usage tracking program, a usage report including the one or more characteristics from the client to the server; and

receiving an expiration notice from the server when access to the e-content exceeds an expiration setpoint.

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